

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN SCHOOL BOARD MEETINGS

All regular and special meetings of the school board are open to the public, and time will be provided at each regular meeting for members of the public to address the board. Time for public comment will be provided (1) before approval of the consent agenda; (2) at a time certain during the meeting; (3) before a vote is called on any action item; and (4) before the board's final comments. The board follows a written agenda, which is determined in advance. A copy of the agenda is available to assist citizens in following the proceedings. The following procedure has been established for anyone wishing to address the school board during the time reserved for public comment.

The board is a policy-making body and expects that complaints will be handled through administrative channels. Anyone wishing to express an opinion during a time reserved for public comment shall complete an information request card in order to be recognized. Information request cards will be accepted until commencement of the times on the agenda provided for public comment, at which time no additional cards will be received. Speakers will be recognized in the order in which their cards are received by the Chair. The board Chair will be responsible for recognizing speakers. Speakers shall speak from the lectern, properly identify themselves and limit their comments to three minutes. Any audience support of a speaker will be charged against that speaker's time. The board values public comments and will respect the times provided for each speaker. It intends those times be used by the speaker without unnecessary interruption or response by board members. The absence of board member comment or response does not in any way suggest the member's lack of interest in, or the member's support or opposition to, the public comment.

The Chair may, when practicable or by a vote of the Board, provide additional time for comment and/or adjust the time available to individual speakers in order to accommodate the number of speakers wishing to speak and/or the number of topics to be addressed.

II. Public Participation

Public Comment will be allowed at each regular meeting of the board at the following times and according to the following schedule:

A. Regular School Board Meetings

1. Consent Agenda. Time will be provided for public comment on any item on the consent agenda before a vote is called for approval of the consent agenda.
2. Public Comment. A total of 15 minutes will be provided for public comment on any matter related to education.

3. Action Item. Time will be provided for public comment on any action item on the agenda before a vote is called on that item.
4. Speakers Before Board's Comments. Time will be provided for public comment before the board's final comments.

B. Agenda

A member of the public who wishes to have a matter placed on the school board agenda must submit a written request to the superintendent. The request must outline the nature of the individual's concern and the action the individual desires from the board. The superintendent may schedule the individual's presentation to the board as soon as practicable.

If the superintendent does not agree to place the requested item on the agenda, the individual may petition any of the school board members requesting placement of the item on the agenda. A school board member, in his or her sole discretion, may make a motion during a regular school board meeting to have the item placed on the agenda. If the motion passes, the superintendent shall schedule the item on the agenda for the next regular school board meeting.

C. Workshops

The board may also choose to schedule workshops in order to receive input from staff on particular issues. Upon conclusion of the workshop format, the board shall have the discretion to receive public comment on the subject(s) of the workshop.

D. Public Fora

Individual board members may hold forums for the purpose of receiving public comment. However, if two or more members of the school board will be present, then the forum must comply with Section 286.011, Florida Statutes.

E. Decorum

The following provisions are designed to promote the orderly and efficient conduct of public meetings and not to regulate speaker content beyond the limits of the law.

1. Citizen's remarks should be directed to the presiding officer or the Board as a whole and not to individual Board members.
2. Speakers commenting on agenda items shall confine their comments solely to the agenda item being discussed. During the public hearing, speakers must limit their remarks to matters related to business of the District. Unless it is an agenda item, speakers are prohibited from discussing their own pending court cases and filed claims or complaints

against the District or District personnel. Similarly, employees are prohibited from discussing any disciplinary matter that affects them individually unless it is an agenda item.

3. Speakers may not use any form of profanity or loud and/or abusive comments. Speakers shall not engage in personal attacks, abusive language or other conduct which interferes with conduct of the meeting. The Chair has the right to terminate any speaker's privilege to address the board if this rule is violated. Members of the audience should be courteous to all speakers and shall refrain from making audible comments or applauding speakers during the meeting.
4. During public input, any action or noise that causes or creates an imminent threat of a disturbance or disruption, including but not limited to, clapping, applauding, heckling, shouting comments from the audience, or verbal outbursts in support or opposition to a speaker or his/her remarks is prohibited. During period of public recognition applause may be permitted. No signs or placards shall be allowed in the Board meeting. Persons exiting the Board meeting shall do so quietly.
5. The Chair may notify and warn speakers that their comments have gone beyond the subject matter for which they had signed up to address, address matters that are not related to the business of the School District, constitute personal attacks on individuals or otherwise violate this policy.
6. The Chair may recess the meeting if a speaker persists in addressing irrelevant topics or engaging in personal attacks. The Chair has the authority after one warning to order the removal of the speaker from the meetings.

Following a warning, any person making impertinent or slanderous remarks or engages in boisterous behavior which the Chair or Board determines constitutes an actual imminent threat of a disturbance or disruption shall be barred from further appearance before the Board for the balance of the meeting.

Under the provisions of Section 1001.372(3), Florida Statutes, the presiding officer may order the removal of any person using the time reserved for public comment to interfere with the expeditious and orderly process of the meeting.

The Chair, or the Chair's designee, may request the assistance of law enforcement officers in the removal of a disorderly person when that person's conduct interferes with the orderly progress of the meeting.

7. Personal cellular telephone conversations while in the room when the Board meeting is being conducted is not permitted. Such conversations are permitted only during meeting breaks or recess. Ringers must be set to silent mode to avoid disruption of proceedings. Individuals, including those on the dais, must exit the chambers to answer incoming cell phone calls.
8. The Board may also prohibit public participation on ministerial acts, including but not limited to, approval of Board minutes and bid-opening lists. The Board may allow public comment on ceremonial proclamations and resolutions.
9. Whenever a public a speaker's comments raise legal issues that may adversely impact the board, the Board's parliamentarian may provide a verbal instruction or guidance to the Board.
10. Speakers may not refuse to yield the podium when the Chair has advised that their time is up.
11. Speakers must complete an information request card approved by the School Board.

Legal Authority:

Sections 1001.41, 1001.372, Florida Statutes

Laws Implemented:

Sections 120.53(6), 1001.372, 286.011, Florida Statutes

History:

(Adopted -- November 28, 1984)

(Revised -- May 14, 1991; September 12, 1995; January 26, 2016; July 24, 2018; April 9, 2019, January 25, 2022, September 12, 2023)

(Effective Date – September 12, 2023)